

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### ATLANTIC SALT MARSH SNAKE PROPOSED AS THREATENED

The Atlantic salt marsh snake, a slender, striped, water snake of the Atlantic coast of Florida, has been proposed for listing as threatened on the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

The proposal was published in the June 3, 1977, Federal Register. Interested persons have until September 1, 1977, to comment on the proposal.

The Atlantic salt marsh snake inhabits brackish and salt water environments along the coast of three counties in central Florida. It usually is found associated with fiddler crab burrows, in which it lives and retreats when confronted by danger. Unlike most water and salt marsh snakes, this species is docile and will not attempt to bite. Fewer than 35 specimens are known to science even though this snake was first described in 1895.

The main threat to the Atlantic salt marsh snake is from the continued destruction of its habitat for development. Habitat modification not only destroys the environment of this snake, but also may lead to the breakdown of ecological isolating mechanisms which keep it from interbreeding with adjacent species of salt marsh snakes, and thus from hybridizing.

It is hoped that this proposed action will stimulate conservation activities for this unique snake.

Persons wishing to participate in this rulemaking should submit written comments, preferably in triplicate, to the Director (FWS/OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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